ON SCENE

THE NATIONAL MARITIME SAR REVIEW

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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INMARSAT

What is INMARSAT? INMARSAT will be a new communications system for world shipping. The International Convention on the International Maritime Satellite Organization (INMARSAT) came into force on 16 July 1979. Its purpose is to establish a new international organization, which will operate a worldwide communications system for merchant shipping based upon space technology and the use of satellites.

THE ORIGINS OF INMARSAT

Of greatest interest to ON SCENE readers with respect to radio communications is its use at sea for distress and safety purposes. The use of wireless telegraphy for maritime purposes began toward the end of the last century. Since that time the use of radio has saved thousands of lives, and the installation of radio equipment is now an international requirement for all ships of 300 gross tons and over.

Another important use of radio communications is for the operational control of ships' movements by the owners. The advantages of satellite communications have already been proven by the United States MARISAT system operated by COMSAT General Corp., described in a previous issue of ON SCENE. The satellite system provides reliable high-quality communications from any point in the world, unaffected by variations in the radio climate familiar to terrestrial communications. It is expected that the MARISAT system will become a part of the INMARSAT system as the latter is developed.

FUNCTIONING OF INMARSAT

Among the operational requirements which will be satisfied by INMARSAT and of great interest for search and rescue operations are: (1) handling of distress cases, including distress messages and search and rescue control communications; (2) determination by land-based stations of the position of any ship in distress and position of search and rescue units involved in the operation; (3) distribution of urgent safety messages such as requests for medical assistance; (4) selective calling and multiple access techniques to facilitate communications from shore to ship; (5) continuous tracking of ships in the system.

Many other requirements will be satisfied by the new system. All in all INMARSAT ushers in a new era in maritime communications, which may be as significant in the long run as the original installation of radio equipment on board ships in the last century.

ON SCENE is a SAR publication published by the Commandant, U. S. Coast Guard as a source of information concerning current and proposed procedures as well as new developments in SAR. Articles contained herein are non-record and non-directive.

SOLAS 1974

The newest version of the major international agreement on maritime safety - the 1974 International Convention on Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) - will come into force on 25 May 1980.

This is the latest in a series of Safety of Life at Sea Conventions which go back to 1914. This latest version will replace the SOLAS convention adopted in 1960. A major feature of the new convention is the incorporation of a new amendment procedure which will make it easier to bring amendments into force.

The Secretary General of IMCO, Mr. C. P. Srivastava, said of this convention: "The entry into force of the 1974 convention is one of the most imporant events of the last few years as far as the safety of international shipping is concerned.

"The complexity and importance of the convention meant that the requirements for entry into force were high: It is, after all, essential that the convention applies to as many ships as possible, if it is to be effective.

"But the new amendment procedure will ensure that the convention is kept up-to-date with a minimum of delay - two years at most - and work has already started on updating some sections."

HISTORY OF SOLAS

The first SOLAS convention was adopted in 1914 to a great extent as a result of the TITANIC disaster, but it did not come into force, because of the outbreak of World War I. The second SOLAS was adopted in 1928 and came into force in 1933. A third was adopted in 1948 and a fourth in 1960.

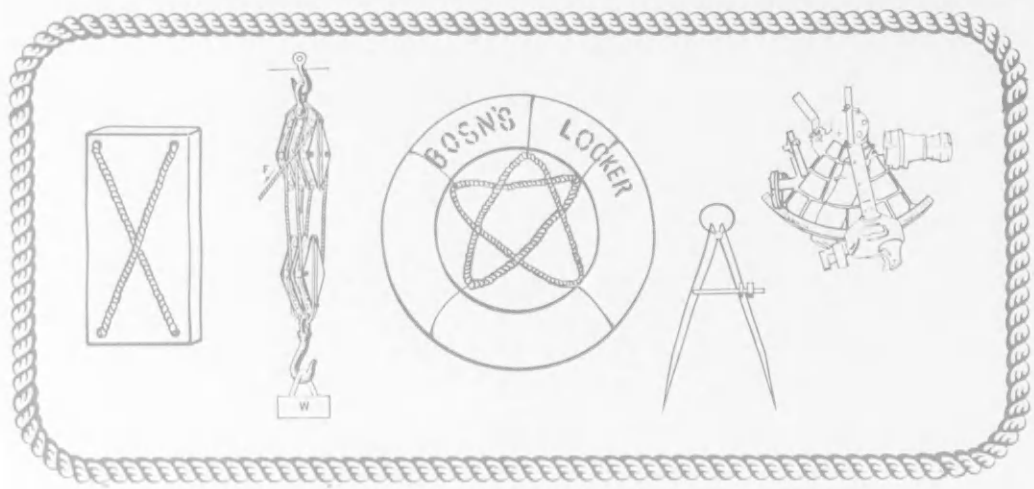
One of the major drawbacks of the 1960 convention was the amendment procedure, which proved to be very slow. In order to come into force, amendments had to be accepted by two-thirds of the contracting countries, and the increase in their number (approximately 100) meant that the required figure was always being raised.

The 1974 convention incorporates a tacit acceptance procedure, which will greatly speed up the entry into force of new amendments to the technical provisions. When these are adopted by the Maritime Safety Committee, they will automatically come into force two years after being communicated to contracting governments, unless they are rejected by one-third of the contracting governments or by contracting governments owning 50 percent of the world's gross tonnage of merchant shipping. The longer amendment procedure still applies to the articles of the convention and Chapter 1 of the Annex.

The main objective of the SOLAS convention is to specify minimum standards for the construction, equipment, and operation of ships to enhance safety.

Chapter 1 of the convention annex deals with general provisions. Chapter 2 covers subdivision and stability. Chapter 3 deals with lifesaving appliances and, among other things, contains the requirements for the type of lifesaving equipment to be carried by ships. Chapter 4 deals with the requirements for radio telegraphy and radio telephony for safety purposes. This chapter is closely linked to the radio regulations of the International Telecommunications Union. Chapter 5 covers safety of navigation - provisions of an operational nature for all ships. Among its provisions are the maintenance of meteorlogical services for ships; the ice patrol service; the routing of ships; and the maintenance of search and rescue facilities. Chapter 6 deals with the carriage of grain, while Chapter 7 deals with the carriage of dangerous goods. And finally, Chapter 8 covers basic requirements for nuclear ships.

The new convention is one more step forword by the maritime community in providing for a high degree of safety for those who travel across the high seas.



THE ANCHOR TRIPLINE—A NEW VARIATION ON AN OLD THEME

Many of us at one time or another have had an anchor foul on a rocky or coral studded bottom. Often, the result will be a lost or broken anchor. Considering present day prices of $115 to $260 per copy, depending on size, replacement of an anchor can take a healthy chunk out of a unit's funds. Years ago, when the kedge type anchor was widely used, one technique developed which prevented losing or breaking the anchor was to tie a tripline to the crown of the anchor at the shank. At the other end of the tripline a small anchor buoy was tied. If the anchor became fouled when using this system, the tripline could be pulled thereby backing the anchor away from the obstruction.

The Danforth type anchor, which is the common type anchor found on Coast Guard boats and small cutters today, does not, by its design, permit the use of a tripline since there is no convenient place to tie the line. One solution to this problem was recently provided in the form of a Beneficial Suggestion by BM2 Ronald WEIDMAN who is stationed on the USCGC CAPE CURRENT in Port Everglades, Florida. He recommended that a small padeye or ring be welded to the shank of the Danforth anchor between the two crowns. A tripline can then be secured to the padeye whenever the coxswain deems it necessary.

All units which operate their boats where anchoring may be a problem, should consider modifying their Danforth anchors as described.

BOAT COXSWAIN'S AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Coast Guard Regulations have been amended by Change No. 6 to define more clearly the boat coxswain's authority and responsibility. This change leaves no doubt that the coxswain insignia identifies man and women who are not only proficient in small boat operations, but are leaders capable of assuming serious responsibilities.

Article 5-1-7, among other things, states

that an officer or enlisted member embarked as a passenger in a boat, ship, or aircraft, not under their command, has no authority over, responsibility for, or right to assume command of the boat, ship, or aircraft.

Article 5-1-8 deals more directly with the authority or responsibility of the boat coxswain. Under it the coxswain is responsible for the safety and conduct of passengers and crew; the safe operation and navigation of the boat; and the completion of the sortie or mission assigned. The coxswain is the direct representative of the commanding officer or officer-in-charge and, as such, has authority and responsibility which are independent of rank or seniority in relation to other personnel embarked. This authority and responsibility exists only when the boat is engaged on a specific sortie or mission.

The only persons embarked in a boat that may relieve the coxswain of the responsibilities described are: (1) the coxswain's commanding officer, the officer-in-charge, executive officer, or executive petty officer; (2) a senior officer at the scene of a distress, emergency, or other abnormal situation who exercises senior officer present authority under the provisions of Article 5-1-4, whether or not other units are involved.

Hats Off To 3rd COAST GUARD DISTRICT NEW FAMILIARIZATION PROGRAM

Photos & Story by PA3 Jim McGranachan, USCG

Doctors from the U.S. Public Health Service, Physicians Assistants and a variety of personnel from the United States Coast Guard are participating in a new program to further integrate their combined knowledge and skills. During 1978, the Coast Guard assisted in 2,295 medical evacuation cases in which Public Health Service doctors played an integral part in the decision to launch rescue operations. This case-load, along with the potential for disaster inherent in air-sea rescue operations, magnifies the intentions of the program designers.

On February 17, 1979, three U.S. Coast Guardsmen and a member of the Canadian Forces Rescue Service died when their helicopter crashed into 15 foot winter seas. They were attempting to evacuate an injured crewman aboard a Japanese fishing vessel, 180 miles southeast of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. This accident, which claimed four lives, was further evidence of the nature of the business. A rescue operation at sea is a reasonably risky venture at best.

Today, when the Coast Guard responds to the call for help, one of the Coast Guard Rescue Coordination Centers coast to coast, including Alaska and Hawaii, will

assume coordination of the forces activated to conduct both land and air-sea rescues. When confronted with a medical emergency - often hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles at sea - the controllers who man these centers must rely on the medical advice of doctors from the Public Health Service when deciding if and how human resources should be committed to individual medical evacuation cases.

In June, 1979, Coast Guard Headquarters issued instructions which stressed the necessity of good and meaningful communications between rescue coordinators and medical personnel during the course of medical emergencies at sea. The instruction noted that, "The U.S. Public Health Service has historically provided medical advice by radio to ships at sea. U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) physicians have also provided advice to the Coast Guard forces. Frequently, however, USPHS personnel are unfamiliar with Coast Guard Search and Rescue (SAR) operations and with Coast Guard aircraft and vessels."

In response to these instructions, Lt. Stephen J. HARVEY, senior controller at the Coast Guard Atlantic Area Rescue Coordination Center, Governors Island, N.Y., has begun to implement an orientation program he helped to design. "The intention", says Harvey, "is to familiarize doctors of the U.S. Public Health Service with air-sea rescue techniques. The method is to physically expose these physicians to the hardships and inherent dangers of rescue operations at sea. The desired result is to maximize the ability of all involved personnel to weigh the risks to the life-savers versus the needs of a victim."

Among the first medical personnel to participate in the new program were Dr. Catherine Fitzpatrick and Dr. Daniel Kim of the U.S. Public Health Service and Chief Warrant Officer Ray Leyko, a Coast Guard Physician's Assistant.

Lieutenant Stephen J. HARVEY, senior controller at the U. S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area Rescue Coordination Center, Governors Island, N.Y. explains the intricacies of helicopter operations to Dr. Daniel Kim of the U. S. Public Health Service.

The three medical officers were first introduced to the intricacies of helicopter operations during a thorough briefing at the Coast Guard Air Station, Brooklyn, New York. Lt. HARVEY then escorted the medical group to Rockaway, N.Y., where they boarded the Coast Guard Cutter CAPE STRAIT for some "hands on" experience.

The idea seems to have accomplished a number of objectives. Dr. Fitzpatrick explained, "Because medical evacuations often seem to run so smoothly, we doctors tend to take for granted the sheer dynamics of getting a helicopter to rendezvous with ships at sea. To evacuate patients from rolling heaving decks, often at night during the worst weather conditions is indeed an impressive achievement. Having now shared in the experience of being lifted from the deck of a moving ship, I feel that I have greater insight, a more accurate basis from which to make operational medical recommendations."

Dr. Daniel Kim of the U. S. Public Health Service experiences first hand the sensation of being hoisted from a moving ship to a Coast Guard helicopter.

This is exactly the reaction Lt. HARVEY hoped to achieve when he organized the program. He noted, "The advantage of having physicians hoisted is that the rescue coordinators and the physicians will be able to communicate in the same language. There is nothing like doing a hoist yourself. Trying to maintain balance on the pitching deck of a ship, bouncing around in a dangling basket, hearing the roar of helicopter engines are all factors that a patient is exposed to during a medical evacuation. We do not want the physicians to become overcautious when considering the evacuation of a patient, but we do want the physicians to appreciate exactly what is involved in this type of operation."

As the CAPE STRAIT brought its medical passengers to a helicopter rendezvous at sea, its Captain, Lieutenant Junior Grade Jeffery HUHN acquainted his guests with his cutter. Besides receiving a taste of shipboard life, they talked in depth to members of the crew, learning about the problems and hazards they face during rescue operations.

In the new Coast Guard air-sea rescue program, physicians of the U. S. Public Health Service learn through first-hand experience that dangling beneath a roaring helicopter can be traumatic for some patients.

A helicopter from Brooklyn Air Station met the CAPE STRAIT a few miles outside New York Harbor in the Atlantic Ocean. This gave the medical officers an opportunity to watch the harmony of an aircraft and a ship working closely together. More importantly, it gave them a chance to actually feel the sensations associated with being lifted from a moving ship and flying in a helicopter.

As were the others, Dr. Kim was enthusiastic about the experience. "This exercise made me aware of the forces set into motion when I make a recommendation to the Coast Guard for a medical evacuation," said Dr. Kim. "I can now visualize what actually happens out there. I have better feel for what I am actually asking those young men to do."

When asked to summarize her thoughts about the orientation, Dr. Fitzpatrick observed, "a program like this counters the tendency for specialists to be isolated in their own areas. Participating on the open ocean in an air-sea rescue operation gave me a greater awareness of what can and can not be done on the open seas. The safety of many people can be involved when a medical evacuation is necessary. Thanks to this orientation program, I feel better equipped to make the proper decision when I am called to make an operational medical recommendation."

Dr. Fitzpatrick also commented on another aspect of the program which she appreciates. "Working in the field with the Coast Guard", she said, "definitely left me with the feeling of being part of a proud life-saving team."

COPING WITH ERRONEOUS POSITIONS OF DISTRESSED BOATS

By JOHN R. BARKLEY, 11th Coast Guard District Auxiliary

On Sunday, April 22, 1979, the Coast Guard Auxiliary Vessel NAJO was on a Voluntary Safety Patrol out of Marina Del Rey patroling the coastal waters off Southern California. At 1155 a call was received from the Coast Guard Radio Station at Long Beach with a request to assist a distressed vessel 10 miles south of Marina Del Rey. After being underway for 15 or 20 minutes the Coast Guard called again saying the distressed vessel, IMA ELK II had corrected their position to be 3 or 4 miles off El Segundo since they had seen a large tanker ship. During all of this time the NAJO had been unable to hear the distressed vessel's radio, so Long Beach had to relay their transmissions. At this time the NAJO's crew were of the opinion the IMA ELK II was probably around Palo Verde Pt. on the Long Beach side thus accounting for the fact that the Coast Guard had communications while they did not, so they headed out to clear the Point.

At 1313 Long Beach informed the NAJO that the skipper of the IMA ELK II had a DF bearing on the Marina Del Rey beacon of 045° Mag and a sight with a hand bearing compass of 300° Mag, on Pt. Dume. Charting this position NAJO set a new course. About 45 minutes later RCC radioed as follows: "NAJO you are directed to stay with this case as we are getting concerned and think he really has no idea of his location."

NAJO arrived at the intersection of the position lines. Visiblity was approximately 10 miles and no boat was in sight; neither was the coast line visible, nor was Pt. Dume. In the previous radio message RCC also stated they were going to divert a helicopter to aid in the search. NAJO headed further out to sea and, shortly, a large freighter was seen heading up the coast. The time was noted on the chart along with the bearing and NAJO requested Long Beach to ascertain if the IMA ELK II had it in sight and if they did to get a bearing. The answer came back affirmative with a bearing of 040° Mag. The beacon bearing on Marine Del Rey of 045° Mag, and the two bearings on the large freighter showed that the distressed vessel had to be on the seaward side of the traffic separation lane where the freighter was seen, so NAJO set a course of 225° Mag. At 1425 the Coast Guard Helo 1445 passed over the NAJO and radioed they were going to search ahead and in a few minutes disappeared from sight. Shortly the helo could be heard trying to establish communications and a faint garbled response could be detected.

Finally the helo could be seen heading back and they radioed the NAJO to the effect that NAJO's course looked good but suggested the course be altered 5 degrees to starboard. They also gave a position of the distressed vessel and said he was another 10 miles ahead. They said they were running a little low on fuel and were going to return to base. About this time radio communication was established with IMA ELK II and a direction finder was then put to use indicating that the vessel was directly ahead. At 1525 a visual sighting was made. By 1533 the IMA ELK II was under tow, the two POB male persons had put on PFD's and were safely secured down in the cabin. It was deemed too rough to attempt a transfer of them aboard the NAJO so a constant watch was set to observe them all the way in and radio communications were established on VHF channel 6. The distance to the harbor was 27 miles.

Upon arrival at the harbor, Marina Del Rey, the towline was shortened and the skipper of IMA ELK II was questioned about his radio and he pointed at a short, deck mounted, antenna saying his first investment was going to be a higher one. It is fortunate that the Coast Guard Radio Station at Long Beach is situated on high ground giving them big ears. It was after nightfall before the harbor was reached and the skipper of IMA ELK II was asked if he carried flares which he did. He also had a flare gun. He came very close to having to use them.

CONCLUSION:

From many many SAR cases we have learned to accept reported positions of distressed vessels with a grain of salt. Some, not knowing their position, will hazard a guess and will transmit it over the radio as a confirmed fact. It is always well when communications are established with the disabled vessel to inquire if any object at all can be seen on which a bearing can be taken that will aid in determining the correct position.

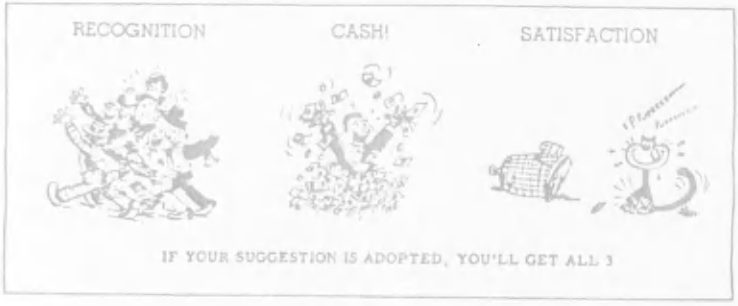
On one case, at night, the NAJO used a rising full moon as a reference point in relation to three bright, quite distinguishable, lights in a horizontal row ashore. NAJO, at the position given by the disabled 30' cruiser, observed the moon rising to the right of the three lights and inquired over the radio if the other boat could see it. The response was affirmative but they could see it on the left of the three lights. This indicated the disabled boat was much further up the coast than the position given. Sure enough it was located seven miles further up the coast and several miles further out to sea although the persons on board, after repeated questioning, were adamant as to the correctness of the position they had first given.

In the case of the IMA ELK II the first two positions given were erroneous although the skipper sincerely thought the second position was correct and that he was off El Segundo, where oil tankers unload, as he had seen a tanker heading SE. As it turned out the tanker he saw was not close to El Segundo at all but some distance at sea in the traffic separation lane. His third given position, an RDF line intersected by a visual bearing on Pt. Dume was bad because Pt. Dume was not visible and the only conclusion is that his bearing was on something else, perhaps a low lying dark cloud. The RDF position line on the Marina Del Rey beacon was a good one and aided in locating him. So the visual bearing on what he thought was Pt. Dume threw his position off by some 14 miles. Consequently NAJO traversed some 44 or 45 miles of open sea on the search plus a 27 mile tow, resulting in a seven hour SAR case, plus the participation of a Coast Guard helicopter for the better part of two hours.

Skipper	John R. Barkley	F-49
Crew	Ann L. Barkley	F-49
Crew	John Erskine	F-12-4

A L L 1 1 t h D I S T R I C T C O A S T G U A R D A U X I L I A R Y

NOTE: The NAJO is equipped with a Modar VHF, one of the best marine radios, and an antenna reaching 28 feet above the waterline.



The Liferaft

THIRST:

General Remarks

THIRST is the sensation which figures most in reports of exposure at sea; in many cases survivors regard it as their greatest trial and some yield to the temptations of drinking strange liquids. ALCOHOL and SEA WATER DRINKING increase thirst.

Lifeboat. North Atlantic.

"The salt spray aggravated my thirst and I felt as if my stomach was full of salt water."

Lifeboat. Arctic Ocean.

Three days in boat. The drinking water was frozen solid. "I found it was better to suck a large piece (of ice) rather than a handfull of small pieces... No one ate very much, nor complained of being hungry, but we all craved for a drink."

Liferaft. North Atlantic.

"...when I came to the surface I hung to a piece of floating wreckage for about four hours until daylight, when I was able to see part of a raft still being supported by two drums. I swam to this raft and remained on it for seventy three hours without food or water and chewed two buttons from my shirt which alleviated both my hunger and my thirst..."

Liferaft. Indian Ocean.

Fifth day. Ensio Tira reported "It was forty hours since we'd drunk anything and my thirst was awful." Seventh day. "We wanted water, we craved for water, but food no longer mattered."

Lifeboat. North Atlantic.

A ten days' ordeal. "Thirst was the chief problem; a lot of the men could not eat the biscuits, they said they were too dry and made them thirsty...we had a gallon of unsweetened lime juice which we mixed with the water at night, and this seemed to quench our thirst most, we really felt we had had something to drink."

Landing Craft. North Atlantic.

A thirteen days' ordeal. Three men without food or water. "When we became unbearably thirsty we went up on deck and ate handfuls of snow, which although very cold, helped to moisten our mouths considerably."

Ship's boat. Antarctic.

A sixteen days' ordeal. Sir Ernest Shackleton wrote "Thirst took possession of us... Lack of water is always the most severe privation that men can be condemned to endure and we found, as during our earlier boat voyage, that the salt water in our clothing and the salt spray that lashed our faces made our thirst grow quickly to a burning pain." "Our mouths were dry and our tongues were swollen." (Sir Ernest found himself on a lee shore) "Our thirst was forgotten in the realization of our imminent danger."

Lifeboat. South Atlantic.

Fifth day. Frank West reported "A wet cloth round the throat seemed to ease our thirst a little." "...David Purdie recalls that he kept a button in his mouth for days on end and lost count of how many buttons he sucked completely away."

Ship's boat. South Pacific.

Eighteenth day, Captain Bligh recorded "...I consider the general run of cloudy and wet weather to be a blessing of Providence. Hot weather would have caused us to have died of thirst; and probably being so constantly covered with rain and sea protected as from that dreadful calamity."

Lifeboat. Indian Ocean.

Third day. Captain Foster reported "The compass was a spirit compass and everyone wanted to drink the spirit, but I could not allow them to do so. Though even at this stage of the journey any liquid that was at all drinkable would have been easily seized on. Unfortunately, my orders about the spirit were disregarded later on." Ninth day. "Most of the crew are now taking baths and all are very often soaking the head with water and keeping on with other means of quenching thirst - breathing sea water into the nostrils, sucking buttons etc."

Liferaft. Doldrums (Atlantic).

Twenty first day. Kenneth Cooke reported "A deathly thirst was our greatest enemy."

Raft. Pacific.

M. Pellissier, reported on the Tahiti Nui II expedition "Thirst was the most dreadful moral test of the expedition.

Sailing boat. North Atlantic.

Lt. Colonel H. G. Hasler, single handed Transatlantic sailor, has reported that drinking through a tube so as to spray liquid on the back of the throat "is perhaps the best way of quenching thirst with the minimum of water... I experimented with drilling a small hole half way up one of my drinking tubes so as to let in air and so squirt aerated water into my gullet." Skattebol has reported "We found that best way to get the best out of three ounces of water was to take a tiny sip at a time, keeping each sip in

the mouth for half a minute or so before allowing it to trickle down the throat. Objectively it would seem that three ounces were three ounces and that it made no difference how fast that these were sent into the system. But actually the pain of thirst is concentrated in the mouth and throat, and is better to give direct relief in this way than indirect relief by swallowing the water quickly."

Lifeboat. South Atlantic.

Some of the natives began to drink salt-water about this time which made them more thirsty and from the tenth day onwards several natives were delirious."

Lifeboat. Doldrums (Atlantic).

"We also had fifteen bottles of spirits on the two boats and during the third evening I gave each man a small tot of rum; I had to discontinue this allowance, however, as I found after a few days that the rum created thirst and the men who took it needed twice as much water."

Inflatable boat. Mediterranean Sea.

Dr. Bombard reported "We always found it a good remedy for any feeling of thirst, especially when our faces were in the sun, to cover them with a towel or piece of cloth soaked in sea-water.

Author's Advice.

Survivors should make the most of their water ration. Do not gulp it, but sip it, let it roll around the mouth and slowly trickle down the throat.

Keep the mouth clean, suck a button, a piece of coal or similar object. In hot weather keep the head and throat cool; douse the head frequently and wrap a wet cloth round the throat.

Do not be tempted to drink strange liquids. Do not drink alcohol, blood or urine."

Editor's Note: *The text in this article is reprinted with permission from International Radio-Medical Centre (CIRM) study Exposure at Sea.*

FROM THE SEVENTH DISTRICT OPCEN NEWSLETTER

KNOW YOUR EQUIPMENT

A recent tour to several units around the District gave indications that some units are not keeping familiar with all SAR equipment at their disposal.

All units should familiarize their personnel with the use and care of Emergency Flotation Bags (EFBs). Training should be held to ensure personnel are not injured while employing these bags. There are also requirements for regular inspections of EFBs.

Another piece of equipment that is often discarded into some bottomless locker is the Expendable Surface Current Probe (ESCP). These are held by most surface units and can easily be used to determine the surface current in a search area. Training should be held at all units on the use and operation of ESCPs and EFBs before they are needed in a case.

It would be both an embarrassment to your unit and a hindrance to the SAR effort if there was a need for ESCPs or EFBs to be employed and your unit was slow or incorrect in their use. Information concerning the proper use and handling of EFBs can be found in the Coast Guard Rescue and Survival Systems Manual (COMDTINST M10470.10).

THE SMALLEST MISTAKE

On 17 July 1979, CCGDSEVEN OPCEN worked a SAR case which points out how one tiny mistake could have disastrous effects.

At 170800Q OPCEN received a report that a 26' sport-fisherman with 2 or 3 POBs was overdue since PM of 15 July. His route carried him through the Gulf Stream which made prompt action imperative.

Immediately EXCOMs/Portchecks were commenced spanning 2 complete groups. A UMIB was issued. OPCEN laid the ground-work for a Gulf Stream search (which included requesting a P-3 from the Navy and an HC-130 from COMLANTAREA). Everything was in motion. Departure and non-arrival had by now been confirmed.

But at 1034Q, one Group Office had received a call (via L/L) from a female caller who stated that she was a passenger on a boat which had probably been reported overdue, but which was now moored at a local marina. The woman did not give her name or phone number, or even the name of her boat.

The Group ADO, being elated at this report assumed that the woman caller was from the overdue 26 footer. After all, the 26 footer was the only overdue boat that he was working. And the 26 footer had a woman passenger, so it naturally followed that the 26 footer was safe. The ADO called OPCEN and reported that the 26 footer was moored safely.

OPCEN notified the Groups to cancel the EXCOMS and UMIB, and asked the Group that had reported the vessel located to confirm that he was located.

The Group office agreed. but had some difficulty in doing so and also became occupied with another major case where many persons were reported in immediate danger.

By 1515Q the vessel's location still had not been confirmed. OPCEN had recontacted the reporting source who doubted that the 26 footer would have gone into that particular marina. OPCEN diverted a HELO and boat to check the area near the marina in case the 26 footer had anchored off. Meanwhile another vessel had been reported overdue to the same marina (but from a different departure point). A brief PRECOM located this 2nd vessel at the marina. OPCEN called the reporting source to notify her that her boat had been located. Although the original R/S was not at home, a crewmember of the 2nd overdue boat stated that the boat had arrived earlier in the morning and that his wife had called our Group Office at 1030Q to notify them of the vessel's arrival in case they had been reported overdue. It was now 1550Q and it was clear to the controller that the 2nd overdue vessel called in at 1030Q and the Group mistook the caller for a passenger on the 26 footer (which was still missing). The Group ADO concurred that this was obviously the case.

EXCOMs were re-started, a UMIB was reissued, and OPCEN scrambled to get 2 aircraft to the scene prior to dark. So much time had been wasted! The aircraft got on-scene at 1800Q.

This story has a happy ending. The 26 footer arrived at its original destination later that night (17 July). He had stopped at another port for gas, and was never in any real danger. But this case could have had much more devastating results.

This case is pointed out, not to berate a certain Group or ADO. In fact the particular Group involved has an excellent reputation. This case is reviewed to illustrate lessons which could save us all - at the station, Group and District level a great deal of grief.

1. When reports are received by OPCEN/Group/Station levels, ensure that the callers name/phone number/exact locations is obtained before he or she hangs up. Slow the caller down. Be patient. This is a good idea whether you are receiving the initial report of an overdue vessel or when you're receiving information that the subject has arrived.

2. Sometimes a case is put "on the back-burner" for a while as more urgent

cases spring up. Use caution in doing this. If you need help, most Group Offices (and OPCEN) have additional personnel to assist you if you're completely swamped over. Granted, we all hate to admit we need additional help, but our pride should never get in the way of our job. Good Luck.

Editor's Note: *Another lesson from this one is: Don't be mislead into closing a case without positive information that the specific craft is safe.*

FIRST-LIGHT SEARCH REVISTED

Editor's Note: *A recent SAR case study once again brought to mind the need for first-light searches and when they should be conducted. Accordingly we are reprinting this article, slightly modified, from Issue 4-74.*

A number of recent SAR cases indicate that SAR coordinators should take a hard look at their policies on first-light searches.

A first-light search is one in which search units are on-scene approximately one-half hour before sunrise. Such searches are often called for when the need arises to take advantage of the earliest light available for a visual search. Another way of putting it is that a first light search is usually directed when the need for the search becomes obvious during the night but effective visual search is hampered because of the limitation imposed by darkness.

The following are instances of first-light search requirements:

a. A distress incident occurs during the hours of darkness. An immediate night search for flares or other light signals, or a night illumination search, is conducted and an extended morning search is planned.

b. A cabin cruiser is reported overdue in the early morning. Communication checks have been initiated. A first-light search is planned in the event that the checks do not turn up the missing boat.

c. A small boat with an inexperienced operator is reported overdue at night after a period of severe weather. A night search has been launched but a back-up early morning search is planned.

Distribution (SDL No. 110

A: v(6);u(5);acdefghmn(3);ijkly(2);prs(1)
B: g(40);ce(25);fhn(10);b(5);ij(3);kn(2);lopqst(1)
C: ai(5);bd(3);ot(2);efghjmnprsuw(1)
D: ltuvx(2);adgjknoqyz(1)
E: kln(1)
F: bcjkmp(1)
H: abceg(1)
List CG-39

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